A. Uniqueness: Cuban embargo will be lifted, but it will be a tough push. **Adams 2/15[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**In another step** in the process **to thaw relations with Cuba**, **a group of** **lawmakers** on Thursday **introduced legislation to lift the trade embargo** that has existed with the country for decades. The legislation comes **two months after the White House announced** its **plans to normalize relations** with Cuba, and two weeks after a group of lawmakers introduced legislation to relax travel restrictions between the U.S. and Cuba. The opening to Cuba is a complicated, multi-pronged effort — part of which Congress can influence, part of which the administration can, and has, implemented on its own authority. The December announcement by the White House already loosened some travel and financial restrictions. But the major controls on travel and trade are much stronger and reversing them would require congressional action. The legislation was introduced by Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., who was joined by Sens. Mike Enzi, R-Wyo., Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., Jeff Flake, R-Ariz., Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., and Dick Durbin, D-Ill. According to its sponsors, the bill would eliminate legal barriers to Americans doing business in Cuba and “pave the way for new economic opportunities for American businesses and farmers.” If passed, it would repeal laws on the books that block Americans from doing business in Cuba; it would not repeal laws addressing human rights or property claims against the Cuban government. [Said Klobuchar in a statement](http://www.klobuchar.senate.gov/public/news-releases?ID=cd51efe8-3943-47e3-8d22-e105a4a356cd" \o "" \t "_blank): “It’s time to the turn the page on our Cuba policy. Fifty years of the embargo have not secured our interests in Cuba and have disadvantaged American businesses by restricting commerce with a market of 11 million people just 90 miles from our shores.” **The legislation is being pushed by farm interests**, including the U.S. Agriculture Coalition for Cuba. The U.S. embargo against Cuba has existed in some form since 1960, but it was under the president’s purview until Congress passed the Helms-Burton Act in 1996. The law says the embargo stays in place until Cuba holds free and fair elections, releases political prisoners and guarantees free speech and workers’ rights. Only Congress can lift the embargo. The embargo was initially designed to punish Fidel Castro for seizing U.S. properties in Cuba, embracing the Soviet Union and trying to subvert many of his Latin American neighbors. Over time, however, the embargo has been the biggest source of diplomatic and political tension between the two countries. U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a Republican from Miami, said in a statement that opponents of the embargo attempt to lift it every Congress. “There is already a process for lifting the embargo: free and fair elections in Cuba, respect for fundamental human rights, the release of all political prisoners and other requirements of Helms-Burton,” she said. “Instead of empowering the regime, we should stand with the Cuban people and their pro-democracy leaders to ensure that when history is written, we are on the side of liberty.” **Experts say** that **overturning the embargo will be difficult — although a coalition of Democrats, libertarian Republicans and farm state lawmakers** from both parties **could** eventually **make it happen.**

**B-link:** Minimum wage increase kills Obama’s political capital – major Republican opposition – means he can’t pass other things **Shiner 13**[[2]](#footnote-2)

Outside Congress, **Democrats** and labor unions **are fighting for** an **increase in** the federal **minimum wage.** But **inside the Dome, Democrats are strapped for political capital** to pass legislation as they engage in a multifront battle against Republicans to extend jobless benefits and protect social programs cut by the sequester. Even approving unemployment benefits before the end of 2013 is shaping up to be a tough haul for Democrats, who so far have failed to negotiate an extension as part of year-end budget talks. And though senators such as Tom Harkin of Iowa have proposed minimum wage legislation, it’s unclear whether there’s any room to attach such a proposal to pending must-pass bills such as the defense authorization. And there certainly is not a strong desire from the GOP-controlled House to pass a stand-alone bill. But **as Republicans try to avoid discussing** the issue of **pay minimums, Democrats are increasingly turning to it**, boosted by a shift in the White House’s economic talking points and current labor unrest nationwide. On Wednesday, President Barack Obama made boosting minimum pay for American workers one of the cornerstones of a major economic address on income inequality. On Thursday, fast-food workers in 100 cities engaged in a strike over wages, including federal contract workers just a stone’s throw from the Capitol at a McDonald’s in the Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum. “A broad majority of Americans agree we should raise the minimum wage. That’s why, last month, voters in New Jersey decided to become the 20th state to raise theirs even higher,” **Obama said** in his speech in Washington. “I agree with those voters, and **I’m going to** keep **push**ing **until we get a higher minimum wage** for hard-working Americans across the entire country. It will be good for our economy. It will be good for our families.” Though Obama highlighted what he believes to be the moral urgency of increasing minimum wage, the overwhelming focus on the Hill has been on how to extend unemployment insurance. House Democrats held a steering committee hearing Thursday on the economic impacts of canceling federal jobless benefits. The administration has estimated that 1.3 million Americans would be immediately affected by a lapse in benefits if Congress fails to act by the Dec. 28 deadline, with an additional 3.6 million people potentially affected by the end of 2014. The problem is that there are very few must-pass vehicles remaining this year to carry any provision, let alone social welfare programs that Republicans largely oppose. Senate Budget Chairwoman Patty Murray, D-Wash., and House Budget Chairman Paul D. Ryan, R-Wis., are not planning to include an extension of jobless benefits as part of their larger budget conference framework. Democrats potentially will need another way, whether by bundling with expiring tax extenders or doctors payments, to approve those benefits. “This is on top of the resistance to raising the minimum wage, for cutting $40 billion out of food stamps,” House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said at the hearing on unemployment insurance benefits Thursday. “I mean, how unconscionable can that be? Pell Grants, now wanting to cut Pell Grants, which are providing education for low-income families. … The list goes on and on of the compounding of all of these things that are not really a budget that is a statement of our values.” Congressional **Democrats are now facing the** uncomfortable **political reality** — largely as a result of the budget agreements they have made over the past few years — **that they will have to choose** **which** benefits to the poor **they prioritize**. And that could leave them unable to pass the minimum wage increase Obama is now touting. An aide to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said the Nevada Democrat is interested in bringing a minimum wage bill to the floor. And an aide to Harkin, whose bill would raise the federal minimum wage to $10.10 per hour, said the senator is working with Reid to schedule a vote “as soon as possible.” Progressives are so skeptical that Congress will be able to act on the minimum wage that members of the House Progressive Caucus are urging Obama to work unilaterally without them. In a letter to the president first reported by National Journal, Reps. Raúl M. Grijalva of Arizona and Keith Ellison of Minnesota said they believe Obama can and should increase the minimum wage by executive order. **Republicans have said** they believe that **a federal increase** in the minimum wage **is unnecessary** because certain states have their own laws mandating higher pay **and that such a move would unduly burden employers with higher overhead costs.**

C. Internal link

Cuba is the lynchpin to Latin American relations, goodwill, solving anti-americanism and successful soft power

Perez 10 J.D. Yale Law School. Working with Koh former Dean of Yale Law and Legal Advisor to the State Department [David A. Perez, America's Cuba Policy: The Way Forward: A Policy Recommendation for the U.S. State Department, Spring, 2010, Harvard Latino Law Review, 13 Harv. Latino L. Rev. 187]

In order to effectively employ soft power in Latin America, the U.S. must repair its image by going on a diplomatic offensive and reminding, not just Latin America's leaders, but also the Latin American people, of the important relationship between the U.S. and Latin America. Many of the problems facing Latin America today cannot be addressed in the absence of U.S. leadership and cooperation. Working with other nations to address these challenges is the best way to shore up legitimacy, earn respect, and repair America's image. Although this proposal focuses heavily on Cuba, every country in Latin America is a potential friend. Washington will have to not only strengthen its existing relationships in the region, but also win over new allies, who look to us for "ideas and solutions, not lectures." n5

When analyzing ecosystems, environmental scientists seek out "keystone species." These are organisms that, despite their small size, function as lynchpins for, or barometers of, the entire system's stability. **Cuba,** despite its size and isolation, **is a keystone nation in Latin America**, having disproportionately dominated Washington's policy toward the region for decades. n6 As a result of its continuing tensions with Havana, America's reputation [\*192] in the region has suffered, as has its ability to deal with other countries. n7 For fifty years, Latin American governments that hoped to endear themselves to the U.S. had to pass the Cuba "litmus test." But now the tables have turned, and **the** Obama Administration, **if it wants to repair America's image in the region, will have to pass a Cuba litmus test of its own**. n8 In short, America must once again be admired if we are going to expect other countries to follow our example**.** To that end, warming relations with Cuba would have a reverberating effect throughout Latin America, and would go a long way toward creating goodwill.

Latin American relations are vital to the US. Needed to combat global problems like proliferation, climate change, and insure economic growth. Only engagement solves

Zedillo et al 08**[[3]](#footnote-3)**

The Need for a Hemispheric Partnership

Historically, the United States and Latin America have rarely developed a genuine and sustained partnership to address regional—let alone global—challenges. Mutual distrust is partly to blame. Also, the LAC countries were often not ready to make stable commitments. The United States had other preoccupations and did not make hemispheric partnership a priority. Problems and solutions were seen from Washington as country-specific and were managed mostly on a country-bycountry basis through bilateral channels. Meanwhile, multilateral forums—such as the Organization of American States and the summits of hemispheric leaders—ran out of steam, became mired in confrontation, or remained underresourced.

If a hemispheric partnership remains elusive, the costs to the United States and its neighbors will be high,in terms of both growing risks and missed opportunities. Without a partnership, the risk that criminal networks pose to the region’s people and institutions will continue to grow**.** Peaceful nuclear technology may be adopted more widely, but without proper safeguards, **the risks of nuclear proliferation will increase.** Adaptation to climate change will take place through isolated, improvised measures by individual countries, rather than through more effective efforts based on mutual learning and coordination.Illegal immigration **to the United States** will continue unabated and unregulated, **adding to an ever-larger underclass that lives and works at the margins of the law. Finally,** the countries around the hemisphere, **including the United States,** will lose valuable opportunities to tap new markets, make new investments, and access valuable resources. It is important to note at the outset that the term “partnership” as used in this report does not mean equal responsibility for all. The asymmetries between the United States and its neighbors are large and will remain so for the foreseeable future. Partnership here means a type of international cooperation whereby a group of countries identif[y]ies common interests, objectives, and solutions, and then each partner country undertakes responsibilities according to its own economic and political capacities to generate shared benefits. Today**,** four changes **in the region have** made a hemispheric partnership both possible and **necessary.** First, the key challenges faced by the United States and the hemisphere’s other countries— such as securing sustainable energy supplies, combating and adapting to climate change, and combating organized crime and drug trafficking—have become so complex and deeply transnational that they cannot be managed or overcome by any single country. Washington needs partners in the LAC region with a shared sense of responsibility and a common stake in the future.For example, drug trafficking and its associated criminal networks have now spread so widely across the hemisphere that they can no longer be regarded as a “U.S. problem,” a “Colombian problem,” or a “Mexican problem.” The threat posed by these networks can only be countered through coordinated efforts across producing, consuming, and transshipment countries, all of which have a shared interest in controlling the flow of arms, money, vehicles, and drugs. The process of **combating and adapting to climate change** also exemplifies the need for a hemispheric partnership. All carbon-emitting societies contribute **to the problem to different degrees,** and all will experience its consequences. The solutions—ranging from developing alternative fuels to adapting to ecological shocks—all require sustained cooperation among the hemisphere’s countries.

Warming risks extinction

Tickell 08 (Oliver, Climate Researcher, The Gaurdian, “On a planet 4C hotter, all we can prepare for is extinction”, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/aug/11/climatechange>)

We need to get prepared for four degrees of global warming, Bob Watson told the Guardian last week. At first sight this looks like wise counsel from the climate science adviser to Defra. But the idea that we could adapt to a 4C rise is absurd and dangerous. Global warming on this scale would be a catastrophe that would mean, in the immortal words that Chief Seattle probably never spoke, "the end of living and the beginning of survival" for humankind. Or perhaps the beginning of our extinction. The collapse of the polar ice caps would become inevitable, bringing long-term sea level rises of 70-80 metres. All the world's coastal plains would be lost, complete with ports, cities, transport and industrial infrastructure, and much of the world's most productive farmland. The world's geography would be transformed much as it was at the end of the last ice age, when sea levels rose by about 120 metres to create the Channel, the North Sea and Cardigan Bay out of dry land. Weather would become extreme and unpredictable, with more frequent and severe droughts, floods and hurricanes. The Earth's carrying capacity would be hugely reduced. Billions would undoubtedly die. Watson's call was supported by the government's former chief scientific adviser, Sir David King, who warned that "if we get to a four-degree rise it is quite possible that we would begin to see a runaway increase". This is a remarkable understatement. The climate system is already experiencing significant feedbacks, notably the summer melting of the Arctic sea ice. The more the ice melts, the more sunshine is absorbed by the sea, and the more the Arctic warms. And as the Arctic warms, the release of billions of tonnes of methane – a greenhouse gas 70 times stronger than carbon dioxide over 20 years – captured under melting permafrost is already under way. To see how far this process could go, look 55.5m years to the Palaeocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum, when a global temperature increase of 6C coincided with the release of about 5,000 gigatonnes of carbon into the atmosphere, both as CO2 and as methane from bogs and seabed sediments. Lush subtropical forests grew in polar regions, and sea levels rose to 100m higher than today. It appears that an initial warming pulse triggered other warming processes. Many scientists warn that this historical event may be analogous to the present: the warming caused by human emissions could propel us towards a similar hothouse Earth.

1. # Adams, Chris. [Miami Herald Washington correspondent] “U.S. senators introduce bill to lift embargo, open trade with Cuba” *Miami Herald.* 2/12/15.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Meredith Shiner (former staff writer for Roll Call). “Minimum Wage Protests Dim, Despite Protests.” Roll Call. December 6th, 2013. http://blogs.rollcall.com/wgdb/minimum-wage-prospects-dim-despite-protests/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Commission Co-Chair for the Brookings Institute Report on the Partnership for the Americas and former President of Mexico [Ernesto Zedillo, Thomas R. Pickering, etc, Rethinking U.S.–Latin American Relations A Hemispheric Partnership for a Turbulent World. Report of the Partnership for the Americas Commission, The Brookings Institution, November 2008, <http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/Research/Files/Reports/2008/11/24%20latin%20america%20partnership/1124_latin_america_partnership.PDF>] [↑](#footnote-ref-3)